

**Labor & Public Employees Committee**  
**Written Testimony of Tracy Gale, RN**  
**February 25, 2010**

My name is Tracy Gale and I am a school nurse in the city of Hartford. I want to testify in favor of paid sick days for working parents in Ct. In schools, we see how lack of paid sick days can affect the health of our students. Parents who work need to be able to take time off from work to tend to a sick child. But without paid sick days, many times this does not happen. Children are sent to school sick. This not only threatens their own health but also threatens the health and well-being of the other students. A sick child needs to be home resting in bed. Parents should not have to choose between putting food on the table and the health and safety of their child.

In 2000, a screening of Hartford children for asthma showed that 41 percent have the illness, which is one of the highest rates in the country. Among the city's Latino youngsters, the rate is 48 percent. Left untreated, asthma is a life-threatening illness. But studies have shown 28% of parents of children with asthma have missed at least one child's medical appointment because they could not get time off work. This is a travesty in a state that is number three in the nation in median household income. We can afford to help those less fortunate by giving parents with asthmatic children the safety net they need to make doctor visits. Paid sick leave is key.

Lack of paid sick days for parents also becomes a public safety issue. This past year's outbreak of the H1N1 virus should teach us that. In order to stop the spread of the disease, parents were asked to keep children home who had a fever over 100 with a cough. I can testify, this was not always followed by those parents who could not afford a day off of work. The general population was then exposed to a potentially deadly flu-strain. Thankfully, H1N1 turned out not to be as bad as originally thought, but the day may come when a true pandemic strikes. Our government needs to insure that all workers and their children can stay home when public health dictates.

Thank you.